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THE ORIGIN OF THE PLACE-NAME KESWICK

The name *Keswick*, Cumberland County, England, has not, it seems to me, as yet been satisfactorily explained. In his volume on *The Lake Counties* Collingwood, commenting on the uncertainty of the origin of the name, compares with *Kelsick*.¹ But the earliest recorded form of the latter name contains no *w*, a fact which he also notes. It is extremely unlikely that the two names should have been identical before the date of the recorded forms. The name *Keswick* does not appear at all in Lindkvist's *Middle English Place-Names of Scandinavian Origin*.² As this work aims to give "The Scandinavian place-nomenclature which came into existence in Old and Middle English times east and north of Watling Street,"³ Lindkvist would seem not to regard either component part as of Scandinavian origin. Sedgfield in his *Place-Names of Cumberland and Westmorland* derives the ending from ON. *vík*, adding with regard to the first part: "It is perhaps the same as in *Keisley*, Westmorland."⁴ Finally, Moorman, *The Place-Names of West Riding, Yorkshire*, derives the identical *Keswick* in Yorkshire from OE. *cese*, 'cheese', + OE. *wíc*, 'dwelling'.⁵

The derivation of the first part *Kes-* from OE. *cese* presents first of all a formal difficulty. Old English *cese*, Modern English 'cheese,' has in Cumberland and surrounding North Country dialects an initial *ch*-sound and a long vowel. Wright's *English Dialect Grammar*⁶ gives only forms with *tf*, as *tfeiz*, *tfiz*, *tfiez*, and *tfiz*, the last for central Cumberland. It is, therefore, hardly likely that a non-palatalized *c* before *e* should have

¹ P. 154.

² Upsala, 1912

³ *I.c.* Preface, p. I.

⁴ P. 69.

⁵ The name *Keswick* does not appear in Björkman's *Zur englischen Namenkunde*, 1912, pp. 6-11, where many names (mainly personal names) are dealt with.

⁶ P. 372.

established itself in the name of the city of *Keswick*, while dialect speech all around had the palatal \check{c} . The vocalic difficulty is not so serious, for in such position shortening of the vowel might possibly have taken place. However, if OE. *cese*+*wīc* were the origin, the modern form should in Cumberland regularly be *Cheeswick*, or *Cheaswick*. Assuming for the moment that the ending represents OE. *-wīc*, the use of this ending in the name of a place to designate it as the place where cheese was made and sold seems very unlikely. One might have compounded *cese* with *hus* or some such general word, but not with the word *wīc*, 'dwelling.'⁷ And the combination with ON. *vīk* is likewise hardly to be thought of. *Vīk* is a common enough place-name-ending in Norway, but such a name as *Ostvik*, as the name of a farmstead, nowhere occurs, and impresses a native at once as impossible. I must, therefore, reject Moorman's explanation of the syllable *kes-* in *Keswick*.

Sedgefield identifies the first part of the name with that of *Keisley* in Westmorland. The oldest form given of the latter is *Kifisclive*. This he derives from ON. *Kefsir*, a personal name, and ON. *klif*, 'a cliff.' In the modern form the ending has become confused with the Eng. word *leah*, 'pasture.'⁸ However, none of the oldest forms of *Keswick* show an *f*; the forms are: *Kesewyk*, 1288, *Kesewik*, 1290, *Keswyk*, 1292, and *Kesewik* (year not given). Also the loss of the weak *i* in *Kifisclive* left a consonant combination which was entirely contrary to the tendency in the dialect to reduce groups of three or four consonants; and *cl* being an inseparable and necessary part of the last element of the name *f* must fall out; cp. *Uldale* < *Ulfdale*. The next earliest form is *Kescliff*. However, in a supposed *Kifiswik* > *Kifswik* the combination *fsw* should have maintained itself at least as long as the date of the earliest occurrences of the name *Keswick*.

As to the second element, *-wick*, it may perfectly well be from either OE. *wīc* or ON. *vīk*. But in this case it seems

⁷ Other definitions in Bosworth-Toller are: abode, residence, lodging; group of houses, hamlet.

⁸ In regard to the first part of *Kifisclif* I would assume contamination of *Kefsir* and OE. *cefes*. In the later form—*Keisley*, then, there has evidently been confusion between *Kifis-* and the name-stem *Keis-* or *Kes-*.

clearly to be ON. *-vík*, for the following reasons: There are in Cumberland two other names that end in *-wick* in the modern form: *Renwick* and *Warwick*. There are three in the neighboring Westmorland: *Butterwick*, *Cunswick*, and *Sedgewick*. *Renwick*, older *Ravenwick*, is from ON. *Hrafnvík*: *Warwick*, older *Wardwyk*, is uncertain. *Sedgefield* derives from OE. *weardswíc*; *Cunswick* (cp. *Cunswick Hall*) is from ON. *Konungsvík*. Cp. the Norwegian place-name *Kongsvík*; *Sedgewick*, older *Siggiswyk*, is from ON. *Siggisvík*; *Butterwick*, older *Buterwik* and *Buttherswic*, is to be derived from a Norse-English personal name *Buter* or *Botere*, which appears as *Buterus* in the Domesday Book. And in other parts of Scandinavian England, i.e. the major part of the Danelaw, the ending *-wick* enters into a number of place-names, the first element of which is a personal name. Outside the region of Scandinavian settlements the ending *-wick* or *-wich* < OE. *wíc* is of infrequent occurrence. The corresponding ending *-vík*, was common in Denmark and Norway, especially in southwestern, western, and northern Norway; —in the volumes of O. Rygh's *Norske Gaardnavne* dealing with these regions names in *-vík* occur on almost every page.

I regard the older recorded forms of *Keswick*, namely *Kesewik*, *Keswyk*, *Kesswik*, as reductions of *Kelswik*, a name which possibly remains in *Kelswick House* in Camerton, Cumberland County. This name may be directly from OSc. *Kæll*, *Kell*, a contraction of *Ketill* and occurring especially in compounds, a fact which tended to the use of *Kell*, in place of *Ketill*, also as a simple name. The substitution of the contract form of this name seems to have occurred especially frequently in the Scandinavian communities in England, so that the test of Danish origin which very early occurrences of the short form *Kell* afford, falls if the earliest recorded instances are from the 11th and the 12th centuries. Finally the contraction may of course have taken place in the place-name itself (i.e., *Kelswik* < *Ketelswik*). Of the reduction of the consonant group *ls* there are examples in other Northern English place-names, as *Ousby* < *Ulsby* < *Ulvesby*, *Ulsby*, = ON. *Ulfsby*. Other names of places with the same first element are: *Kettlesby*, variants, *Ketilby* and *Ketelsby*; *Kettleston* and *Cheteleston*; *Ketelwell* and *Chetel-*

uuelle,⁹ etc., all retaining the uncontracted form. It is likely, therefore, that the settler Keswick received its name from was known as *Kæll* or *Kell* and not *Ketill*. As second part of place-names the contract form of the name *Ketill* was of course very common in WSc. and was apparently about as frequent in England as the full form (*Þorketil*, *Þurcel*; *Ulfetel*, *Ulfel*, *Ulchil*, etc.). In personal names the short form *Kel*-, *Kæl*-, appears also as first component part in both W. and E. Scandinavian and in the corresponding names often on English soil, as *Chelloc* and *Chetelog* in East Anglia. However, a reduction of either the type *Ulfkelswik* or *Kelgrimswik* as likely sources of the name *Keswick* is doubtful, and indeed about impossible as far as the first is concerned on account of the strong stress on the first component part. The typical development in names of this type is illustrated by, e.g., OE. *Aldwinestun*, which through *Aldinston*, date 1254, and *aldeston*, 1296, at last becomes *Alston*, and the name *Kirk Levyngton*, 1284, which is now *Kirkclinton*. In cases of the second type—*Kelgrimswik*—the second element is almost always reduced, but only in a very few cases does it entirely disappear; thus e.g. in *Milton*, the first part of which is either OE. *mylen* or ON. *mylna* (-ton < OE. *tūn*, ON. *tūn*). But here we have an easily assimilated combination. A reduced *Kelgrimswik* would have resulted in something like *Kelgerswick* or *Kellimswick*. The name *Keswick*, therefore, seems to go back to *Kell* as its first element.

I do not believe that the form *Kell* furnishes any sure guide in this case as to the Danish or Norse nationality of the man so named. In the *Saga-Book of the Viking Club*, IV, p. 298, Jon Stefansson assumes all English personal names in -*cetel*, -*ketel*, to be from ON. -*ketill*, while those *cil* -*cil* or -*kel* are Danish. In this he followed the view of Konrad Gislason. Björkman, however, rejected this in his *Nordischen Personennamen in England*, p. 192, note 1, but failed to offer any proof. The evidences to support his view he furnished later.¹⁰ In the one point that both agree about there can be no uncertainty, namely, that in names occurring in records older than the year 1000 the short form (-*cil*, etc.) is Danish. But I also believe that

⁹ Forms taken from Björkman's *Zur englischen Namenkunde*, p. 54.

¹⁰ *Zur englischen Namenkunde*, l.c.

Danish names in *-ketil* must have been very rare among Danish settlers in England and when we meet with this ending in a record of 12th century Norse origin must be assumed in the absence of absolute proof to the contrary. Furthermore the extent to which contractions and reductions of Scandinavian names in England had taken place already early in the 11th century indicates that names with the short ending, *-cel*, etc., may very well be of either Norwegian or Danish. In the case of *Keswick*, Cumberland, the city is located in a very center of Norse settlement as shown by the character of the place-names around it. The settler the city was named after was then in all probability a Norseman. The original meaning of the name is 'Kells Corner,' or 'Kell's place at the bend of the river.'

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